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Media and the rural-urban divide: Implications for advertising revenues and media viability

Authors

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Abstract

Media and the rural-urban divide: Implications for advertising revenues and media viability

Abstract

Irrespective of where they are located, size or circumstance, media have normative roles that expect them to inform, educate and entertain the public. However, differences between media organisations can challenge their opportunities to realise their full benefits. For instance, media in cities have better access to trained human resource and relevant infrastructure with the reverse often being true for rural media. Yet, the latter faces the same normative expectations about their function in society as the former who are better positioned to realise such functions. This paper explores the rural-urban divide vis a vis an important ingredient in media viability and sustainability discourses - advertising revenue. Given, in developing countries, the fact that few cities command most economic activity, we reason that where media is located can have direct implications for their advertising revenue fortunes which, in turn, can affect the opportunity to deliver on their normative functions. We examine the existence and nature of a rural-urban divide in the Ghanaian media from the perspective of revenue mobilization through advertising. A quantitative design is deployed comprising a content analysis of the rate cards^[1] of a sample of 100 radio stations dotted across the country. Findings indicate significant differences in airtime pricing that seems to be linked to location of media. Further, we discover that besides location, other variables may be at play in shaping the advertising revenue prospects of media. These and other discussions are presented.

Key words: Media, Advertising revenues, Urban vs. rural media, Media viability, Ghana

[1] a list that shows the prices that a newspaper, television company, website, etc. charges for different types of advertisements (Cambridge dictionary)

Submission ID

509

Imagining platformization and journalism's future: In-depth interviews with journalists of mainstream media in China

Authors

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Abstract

Platformization has become an overarching trend of China journalism digital reform. Established research verifies that Chinese digital journalism is an important structural force in the digital development and modern governance of Chinese society. The emergence of platforms has both challenged journalism and facilitated its digital reform. However, the number of empirical studies on the platformization of journalism is currently insufficient. Few studies have attempted to explore how editors understand platformization from an internal perspective.

This article employs in-depth interviews with 21 journalists of China's main media agencies, to examine how the platformization and journalism reform are being imagined through journalists. All interviewees were recruited through a snowball sampling method, and each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were focused on three questions: (1) their motivations of platformization; (2) their specific practices of platformization; (3) if/how the platformization had influenced their professional perceptions? Then all interview materials were anonymized and subjected to a discourse analysis that highlighted three main discourse structures of the interviewees: perceptions of technological innovation, professionalism in platform journalism, and imagination of the digital age.

Drawing from the social imaginaries and media affordances, the research finds that platformization suggests new possibilities for media convergence. Platformization enables the media to expand the industrial chains. Additionally, media practitioners expect to be able to use 'platformizational strategy' as a discourse strategy in exchange for financial and policy support. The article then indicates that due to the imbalance of media resources at different levels in China, their platformization aspirations are also inconsistent. For provincial-level media, the purpose of building a platform is to re-engineer the production process. With algorithms and big data, the platform integrates the resources of different departments and promotes the digital transformation of content. But for city-level media, the platform will serve as a field connected to public life and provide users with more diverse services. This case study shows that the practice of Chinese journalists interviewed in the study and their understanding of platformization is contextually bound. It offers a perspective for understanding both continuity and change in the transformation of Chinese journalism as well as digital reform in general.

Submission ID

956

Coalitions for change: Collective action for stronger media ecosystems

Authors

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Abstract

Media freedom is often best defended and advanced by “coalitions” of multiple stakeholders with a shared interest in working together to effect change[1]. Which is why the Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development (PRIMED) programme[2] – itself a collaboration between six media development organisations – sees coalition building as a strategy for improving the information ecosystems of Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone. To inform this strategy, PRIMED partners pooled knowledge and learning from earlier coalition building efforts by way of a literature review, an online workshop and follow-up interviews with key informants. The workshop brought together participants representing and supporting new coalition initiatives in the three PRIMED programme countries with those experienced in coalition building elsewhere – notably Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Zambia, Somalia and Kenya.

The study identified what coalitions are, how they work, key factors influencing their success and sustainability, and the role of international actors. It also produced a generic theory of change for coalition building.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, with the architecture of each coalition dependent on the issues it seeks to address and the context in which it operates, nonetheless the coalitions examined during the study all:

- Contributed to better informed, coordinated and magnified sectoral support,
- Were instrumental in building the confidence and resilience of coalition members,
- Played a role in securing consensus and driving collective action within the media community,
- Offered an interface between national, regional and global stakeholders which served as a source of learning and capacity building with potential to pressurise authorities to embrace or acknowledge international standards.

The more successful coalitions examined evolved organically, driven by the needs and priorities of their constituents. International media development agencies may have initiated and nurtured these coalitions, but coalition members gradually took ownership and set their agenda. Indeed, most coalitions fail because they are driven by short-term, donor-funded activities “that rarely provide for sustained transformative plans and activities”[3]

The study provided the PRIMED programme's partners with both inspiration and a framework for their own coalition building efforts, preliminary findings from which could be shared during the working group's session at the IAMCR. This initiative adds to the media development sector's knowledge of an under-researched but increasingly prioritised area of work, and it can inform the policies and practice of media practitioners, policy makers, donors, as well as point to topics for future research.

[1] See, for example, CIMA's 2019 report 'Confronting the Crisis in Independent Media: A Role for International Assistance'.

[2] See <https://projects-primed.gfmd.info/> for further information about the PRIMED programme.

[3] Dr Haaron Mwangi, co-author of 'Mapping Coalitions – Mapping out coalitions, collaborations, partnerships and networks for media and civil society in sub-Saharan Africa', published in 2021 by the CHARM Project of Civicus and the Fojo Media Institute.

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1401

Radio as a two-way communication tool in conflict- and pandemic-affected communities in Burkina Faso

Authors

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Abstract

During the pandemic it was well-documented that, whilst populations were suffering, media use not only soared but was an essential tool for early awareness campaigns and to allow communities to remain connected during lockdowns. Significant funds were made available for communication projects nationally and internationally to promote improved awareness and combat the negative consequences of the 'infodemic'. But rather than using the media as a one-way route of communication, or a loudspeaker for top-down messaging, our study shows that alternative approaches should be consistently adopted in conflict- and pandemic-affected areas where (media) development projects have been investing significant efforts towards the creation of 'partners' rather than 'beneficiaries' within affected communities. Here, we demonstrated that a two-way flow of communication and participatory journalism are preferred and can benefit from interaction between traditional and new media.

Using Burkina Faso as the case study, this paper illustrates how a joint team of academic researchers from Burkina Faso and the UK, and media development experts from Fondation Hironnelle worked with 163 IDP listeners in affected communities of Kaya, Pissila and Kongoussi in 2021 to include audience feedback, as a continuous process, in radio production during the pandemic. As a result, radio studios were able to integrate improvements, both content and genre, into broadcasts, thus ensuring that the very information messages designed for affected communities were indeed what they wanted. WhatsApp voice messages were used as the data collection method and proved an efficient and advantageous remote engagement tool for both conflict and pandemic-affected areas. The study therefore constructed a two-way stream of communication between radio producers and radio users combining traditional and new media: radio provided factual information to the audiences, and WhatsApp provided feedback to the radio stations, and a deliberative loop was created.

In the light of the deteriorating social and political realities within Burkina Faso's affected communities, the study highlights not only the vital role of radio as an information tool amongst this largely illiterate population, but that radio output must be continuously fine-tuned in collaboration with its audiences to ensure their needs are met. This can be achieved through ongoing listener feedback, collected using remote platforms to ensure remote and isolated communities have a voice. The study additionally identified the large digital gap still affecting the poorest part of the population, particularly women; a high level of distrust in information circulating on social media; and the need to not only focus messages on public health measures but also to cover the wider socio-economic consequences of a pandemic.

Submission ID

1739

Emerging trends in digital media: An analysis of the annual Reuters' Digital News Report

Authors

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Abstract

The most recent massive developments in digital media have resulted in dramatic changes in all fields of media, shaping and defining how we participate, engage, and watch entire media. Therefore, we found new trends that shift the nature of the traditional communication process.

New trends based on integration between technology and media production are becoming the turning point of all changes and shifts in the world media landscape.

Media production is undergoing a major and continuous transformation due to various technological innovations from robots to artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Immersive Storytelling, and drone journalism, which are participating in creating new formats such as infographics, short news videos, news verification applications, data and content security, and other innovations.

This paper is based on a descriptive and analytical study of new trends in media production and technology around the world according to the annual reports of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Reuters' Digital News Report) from the past five years, from 2016–2020.

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism has issued a series of annual reports related to the global new trends in media production. These reports focus on journalism, media, and technology trends, in addition to predictions of these trends in the future.

The study aims to identify the emerging trends in the digital media and the most prominent advanced trends, which are likely to increase considering the unprecedented technological development.

The Qualitative Content Analysis, which is based on deduction, interpretation, and criticism, will focus on extracting the most important new trends through an analysis of the most important scientific tools, samples, data, and methodology used in the Reuters Digital News Reports.

The main question of the paper is: what are the current and anticipated trends in digital media and technology, according to the annual reports of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism for the past five years, from 2016–2021?

The recent report of journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions (2021), demonstrates that "the combination of new devices, better connectivity, and increasingly powerful technology holds out the promise of a smarter world where human intelligence is augmented and supported by machines". We are in a new wave of rapid disruption, with potential downsides and technology developed and controlled by a small number of big technology companies.

Submission ID

1850

Exploring the Paradigm of 'Contextualization' in International Media Assistance

Authors

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Abstract

Deep contextualization is considered the silver bullet of international media assistance. The quest for context sensitivity is rooted on the one hand in the desire to improve the effectiveness of aid programs (Putzel & van der Zwaan 2006; Wassermann & Voltmer 2014; Drefs & Thomaß 2019), and on the other hand in the critical reflection of international aid as a reproduction of colonial practices and perpetuation of colonial North-South power asymmetry (McMichael 2019, Gould 2019). The call for contextualization is aiming to overcome template approaches that are not adapted to specific local circumstances and to "empower" partners from the South as agents of change. In this article, we explore the question of how context-sensitive media assistance can actually be.

We argue that deep contextualization, as sought by international media assistance, is unlikely to be achieved through common approaches in the sector such as engaging local CSOs as implementing partners in the field. Drawing on Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, we conceive of media assistance as a dialectic of structure and agency. Structures as manifested in habits, rules and routines of the aid industry may quite strongly determine how work is implemented in the field, but agents have an impact on these rules too, through their daily practice in which structures are reproduced and modified. We argue that as local partners get involved in international collaboration - i.e., tied to the structures of international media assistance - they gain agency (through funding and support) but at the same time often give up their political and intellectual autonomy since authoritative resources (used to exercise power, according to Giddens) and the allocative resources (material assets, means of production, goods) are still possessed by the international media assistance organization (Giddens, 1984; Gould, 2019). In this kind of interaction, local CSOs slowly evolve into a Northern layer that is presented as 'context' but in fact is an outpost of the Global North in the Global South (Kapoor, 2008; Louw, 2011).

Similarly, it is commonplace to analyze the context of intervention by applying indices and tools that reflect the Western normativity inherent in underlying concepts such as 'independent media' (Maack, 2022; Stremlau 2013; Benson 2015). The findings of the media systems analysis and hence the perception and assessment of the situation is structured according to these values. As a result, international media assistance extends colonial practices while trying to overcome them by means of contextualization.

Ultimately, this paper discusses avenues of how social change in the field of international media assistance can be fostered. If one follows Giddens, “agency” is the power of people facing “the system” - be it a donor, an international organization, or more generally: the aid industry. For this power to be unleashed, however, practical consciousness must be transformed into discursive consciousness; in other words, actors must be enabled to “rationalize” actions. This is equally true for actors in international media assistance, who become aware of the reproduction of quasi-colonial routines.

Submission ID

1889

Analysing and developing media systems beyond neoclassical economics thinking

Authors

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Abstract

This research aims to explore more theoretically how it might be possible to pivot analysing legacy media innovation in a media system where global digital platforms have come to dominate the media market via excessive data analytics capabilities. The focus on data as a competitive advantage has been noted by many authors (Stucke & Grunes 2016; Ezrachi & Stucke 2016; Khan 2016). Others (Caplan & Boyd 2016; Nielsen & Ganter 2017; Bell et al 2016) have witnessed how legacy media including public service media has lost its role in communicating news, opinion pieces and other media content. Hence, the media industry could be argued to be succumbing to platform power (Evens & Donders 2018). With it comes the need to inquire about new analytic frameworks to analyse legacy media, and additionally propose tools that legacy media businesses could use in their operations to improve their competitive position.

The focus on profit driven entrepreneurship largely stems from neoclassical economic theorising. As Nelson & Winter (1982) note, the dominance of neo-classical economics has conditioned a strong focus on micro-economic theorising, however questions of long-term growth are difficult to analyse in this framework (195). It fails to explain innovation in media, information and cultural markets and the changing characteristics that determine economic development and growth over time. With that in mind, it is worth to look into heterodox economics[1] and into related thought models, tools that complement neoclassical theorisation.

Analysing legacy media operations through the lens of heterodox economics is not that new or revolutionary as demonstrated by Cunningham, Flew and Swift (2015). However,

more practical and data-oriented ways of using evolutionary or complexity economics to develop micro-economic approaches to media management have not been explicitly introduced before. The analytic lens proposed are cross innovations thinking and innovation commons while tools for operationalisation of these analytical models are blockchain technology, open data movement and agent-based modelling (ABM). The two analytic approaches focus on aspects such as collaboration, networks of organisations (clusters), bottom-up knowledge, and commons-like innovation. Additionally, blockchain technology brings decentralisation, transparency and accountability into the equation while ABM adds the complexity element to discover relevant innovation patterns in complex networks of organisational relations. Open data as an approach is characterised by using public resources to create more public value in turn. These characteristics theoretically seem to fit legacy media's dual role (creating private and public value) better than orthodox economics as a lens allows. The next step is to test the ideas regarding operationalisation of the proposed tools by asking media organisations' opinions on the matter. For now, however, the main function of the research is to propose new analytic lenses and with it more concrete tools for operationalisation of these lenses.

[1] In the 2008 New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics heterodox economics is defined as 'any economics thought or theory that contrasts with orthodox schools of economic thought, or that may be beyond neoclassical economics'

Submission ID

1994

Sustenance of Print and E-newspapers in the Business of News Media: A Study of Indian News Industry

Authors

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Abstract

With the revolutionary advancements in technology, the existence and sustenance of print newspapers has been challenged time and again. However, despite the last many decades witnessing the 'slow extinction' of print newspapers in the West, the Print newspaper industry in India has survived these challenges through the disruptions. Apart from working on the look and feel of the Print newspaper, the industry has also come up with various changes in its revenue models via alterations in distribution, subscription, and advertisements to adapt to the challenges posed by the rapid growth of more immediate news mediums.

While e-newspapers gained the most during the Covid 19 pandemic, the Print newspapers' business experienced a challenging time. On one hand, many Print newspapers in India had to shut down during Covid 19, on the other hand there were other media groups that announced harsh measures like severe pruning of editorial staff. Due to the pandemic, major print newspaper organisations in the first quarter of FY 2021 witnessed a revenue decline. The circulation of Print newspapers was already impacted by the availability of digital platforms, the pandemic further accelerated the shift in consumers' preferences towards e-newspapers' digital presence. Nonetheless, print newspapers that stood their grounds during the pandemic showed gain in the second phase. The circulation revenue in the first quarter of FY2022 has increased for some of the print media organisations and is expected to improve further. The increase in circulation is an indicator of resilience of the industry and a testament of strong roots of the print media industry in India.

The Hindu was the first website to launch its website back 1995 in India and was followed by more news organisations going online. With improved internet penetration and easy availability of smartphones, the readers have a variety of options to read news. In India, a stage has arrived where print newspapers and online newspapers are co-existing and witnessing growth.

The undertaken study aimed to underscore the factors that necessitated the evolution of e-newspapers and also explored different revenue models. It also aimed at studying the content of print and e-newspapers and prognosticate the future of print and e-newspapers in India. Content analysis helped the researchers to gauge the changes that print newspapers and e-newspapers carried out according to user preferences. It was observed that e-newspapers gave importance to the currency of their contents and provided links to access more information. Essential components of the content were created according to different geographical regions, dialects, hyperlocal content and user generated content. Print newspapers for long were dependent on revenue from advertising but it was found that changes during the Covid-19 pandemic like subscription for almost all e-newspapers which until then could be accessed free of cost, contributed to the growth. Circulation and subscription through different online apps like Paytm (as stay at home essentials) and extended platformization through various technologies, contributed to the growth during and post pandemic. Findings from the survey revealed that print newspapers maintain a strong presence but a shift in users' preferences suggests strong inclination towards digital platforms in the longer run.

Keywords: Digital media, print media industry, newspapers, e-newspapers, online newspapers, New Media., Digitalization

Submission ID

2217

Surviving disinformation: the role of fact-checkers in the new media ecosystem

Authors

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Abstract

Fact-checking is an emergent journalistic genre whose popularity has grown in the last few years, due to the disinformation crisis and the particular social media ecosystem that followed the north American 2016 election and the spread of fake-news. Distinguishing from the normal journalistic checking routine and procedures, it is a meta-verification step long used in many newsrooms, but that came to exist in Portugal only in 2015, and whose status, whether procedure or genre, is still in debate.

This work reflects on the role of fact-checkers in the current toxic disinformation ecosystem and their importance as cornerstone of journalistic credibility. To open the discussion, our survey questioned the knowledge and perception of Portuguese internauts regarding the journalistic practice of fact-checking, seeking to understand the influence exerted by sociodemographic factors and political values and attitudes. In this exploratory study, 618 subjects residing in Portugal, aged between 18 and 88 years ($M = 48.2$; $SD = 11.5$; 69.6% F and 30.4% M), participated voluntarily and anonymously on an online convenience and self-response questionnaire applied between January 1 and 13, 2022.

Our results show that the Portuguese have, in general, a very favorable attitude towards the practice of fact-checking, but reveal greater skepticism regarding news and fact-checkers practices, with nearly 50% suspecting fact-checkers take sides during their work. Fact-checking familiarity is positively and significantly correlated with general political interest, and with the trust in the news. Data shows that those who are most suspicious of news are more likely to naturally distrust the work of fact-checkers, as well as confirm less regularly the news or information to which they are exposed. Also, fact-checking favorability tends to increase along with trust in news, familiarity and the general consumption of fact-checking and news. Finally, attitude towards fact-checking is not significantly affected with the political-ideological orientation of respondents.

Discussing these results, our paper shows that most participants have a very favorable attitude towards the practice of fact-checking and are familiar with the activity of this journalistic genre. However, we observed a lot of skepticism regarding how journalists verify the facts. People recognize the importance of fact-checking, but manifest doubts regarding the impartiality and rigor of fact-checkers' work. Our survey also showed familiarity levels have room to grow, as 68% of respondents admitted that "never" or "almost never" access fact-checking websites.

Our most significant finding is that the very explicit correlation between instruction, political interest (regardless if left or right wing) and trust in news show fact-checkers can be an important step to restore trust in journalistic content, albeit by almost “duplicating” verification routines and procedures that the 24 hours news cycles speed made obsolete or, at least, impossible to comply with.

If the western model of journalism is to have a role in the 21st century liberal democracies, fact-checkers are an essential step to overcome the poisonous disinformation environment social media have created around it.

Submission ID

2573

Towards a Metric for Media Development: A Comparison of Three Methodological Approaches to Elaborate Human Rights Indicators

Authors

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Abstract

This paper presents the methodological framework of the research project “Freedom of Expression in Mexico: A proposal to evaluate public policies on freedom of expression from a Human Rights perspective”, financed by the Mexican Secretary of Public Education. The aim of this project is to operationalize Inter-American standards on freedom of expression into a matrix of over 50 indicators, in order to evaluate public policies related to this right in Mexico.

Beyond the relevance of this project to detect the most urgent problems on freedom of expression in Mexico, we believe that the methodological debate on the construction of human rights indicators can be useful for researchers from other regions, interested in measuring media development or the impact of media development initiatives.

In the first section of the paper we present three methodological approaches to construct human rights indicators on freedom of expression: budget analysis, the United Nations indicators system and the standard-centered approach. In the second section we apply these approaches to a concrete case related to media concentration in Mexico, in order to illustrate the methodological approaches and discuss their usefulness. In the final section we compare the three approaches and draw some conclusions regarding the kind of indicators they can construct, the reliability and versatility of their sources and their adaptability to local contexts.

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2630